

THE EXPLORATION OF SURFACE AND TEXTURE
ON THE INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF MY SCULPTURE

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After generating work for many years in an intuitive, “truth to materials” mindset my intent was to explore the interior possibilities of my sculptural forms and relate these if possible, to the exterior. Alongside this exploration of the interior I introduced surface texture and color onto both interior/exterior surfaces. In some cases the work had undergone a change, which lent new meaning and provided new relationships to exist between the interior/exterior of my sculpture. Not all of the work was satisfactory to me, though I feel there were many positive results from work that may not have been successful. I found that the integration of the interior/exterior dialogue into my existing work provided new meaning allowing new relationships within the work that had not existed previously.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I have always utilized metal in the creation of my sculptures. Whether found, pre-fabricated, or invented, I have chosen this resistive material as the vehicle for expressing my sculptural ideas. When I first attempted to make sculpture, I was attracted to the natural properties of metal, because it required “fire and force” to manipulate it to conform to my ideas. Not only did I respond to its resistance to alteration, but also I responded to its density and gravity. The potential of steel as a visual material for art making was another attractive element. My high regard for the look and feel of this particular material lead me to adopt a “truth to materials” philosophy about the work that I produced with it.

I chose to let the steel be “what it is.” The rawness and immediacy of the bare steel fit my aesthetic requirements and I made no attempt to disguise or alter it beyond immediate fabrication. This approach has suited my artistic personality and characterized my sculpture for several years.

My attraction to steel, as a medium for my art, stems from my first experiences with metal in industrial applications, where prefabricated parts were commonly used in the construction of industrial items of all sizes. Consequently, my work has ranged from miniature to over life-sized with the larger works being my most notable. The time saving aspect of utilizing prefabricated parts in the construction of my sculpture lead me to the

investigation of expanding my industrial palette, to include I-beams, rods, spheres and pipe in various configurations. Due to the random availability of these “pre-fabricated” pieces from industrial suppliers, my approach to creating three-dimensional compositions became largely intuitive. This way of working lead me to develop a three-dimensional vocabulary and conviction about steel that has transformed my vision of what sculpture is to me.

Within the last year I have decided to look more closely at the language of pipe, I-beam, rod, and sphere in my sculpture and expand on the artistic potential they offer. Since these pre-fabricated pieces have an inside as well as an outside, I have become sensitive to the issues of surface and texture in these two adjoining areas of visibility. I am no longer satisfied with the heretofore, natural state of the steel. I have experimented with the use of textured paints and flocking on the surfaces of the pre-fabricated pieces that I use to construct my sculptures. This exploration has opened up new avenues of expression within my work. Through this visual inquiry, I have become concerned about the exterior/interior relationships created in my sculpture and how I can enhance that relationship.

Statement of the Problem

In order to follow through with this current interest and trend in my work, it is my objective in this problem in lieu of thesis to continue this exploration of surface and texture with and without. This exploration will deal with the primary elements in my work described above. I will place an emphasis on the perceived interactions of their individual compositional interior/exterior potentialities in amplifying my work.

Within this body of work I intend to answer the following questions:

1. Will devoting more attention to surface and texture both inside and outside of my sculpture lead me away from or even cause me to abandon a “truth to materials” philosophy?
2. Will new correlations between interior and exterior surfaces create relationships within my three-dimensional compositions that will bring new meaning to my work?
3. Does the use of prefabricated parts have the same impact within an interior/exterior study as it had in my previous work wherein only exteriors were visible?

Methodology

I am proposing to fabricate at least five, but not more than ten new sculptures that will reflect this new approach to my work. I will also provide idea sketches, working drawings and photographic documentations of this project activity.

CHAPTER 2

DISCUSSION OF THE WORK

My objective with this body of work has been to understand the effects of surfaces, textures, and color on small objects that are elements removed from and/or combined with my previous sculptural vocabulary. The following works are also meant to initiate a dialogue between the interior and exterior of these objects with which I have been working. Describing the new body of work I have developed, I feel the intuitive process has played a significant role in the creation of my sculpture. I have, at times, simply worked on small objects and pieces with the sole intention of laying them aside for possible use in the future. I worked in such a way that I seldom had to worry about the consequences of object placement in regards to the finished work. I could fabricate freely, and remove what I deemed unnecessary at my discretion without any significant problems. My adherence to “truth to materials” also afforded me the luxury of making changes, without adversely affecting the surface of the steel.

Question 1. Will devoting more attention to surface and texture both inside and outside of my sculpture lead me away from or even cause me to abandon a “truth to materials” philosophy?

Of the six works in this most recent body of work *Bobbing for Fire* best represents an encouraging turn away from my previous truth to materials standpoint. While still retaining a patinated metallic surface on its two exterior plates *Bobbing for*

Fire has expansive open interior section that is flocked bright red. Within this interior, connecting the exterior plates is a large steel sphere that is flocked in the same manner as the rest of the interior. The departure from the truth to materials philosophy is successful by the interior activity of the work playing a much stronger role than its exterior. The metal surface is unable to hold any visual weight in comparison to what is being contained by it.

Mouthpiece is completely covered with absolutely no steel surface visible. The majority of the exterior surface is covered with flocking with the exception of the three glass bead covered hemispheres on top. Though the form was not diminished by the complete coverage, I felt that *Mouthpiece* could have been more successful had the scale been larger. By increasing the scale, the lower, open interiors would have been more accessible making the relationship between the inside and outside of the form more visually stimulating. Surface texture and color cannot always make up for the lack of proper scale in sculpture.

The last four pieces *Converted*, *Collider*, *Touch* and *The Captain of My Pain* all share similar qualities: metallic and flocked surfaces with restricted views of the interiors. In my opinion these works were not strong enough to move me in any way toward or away from a “truth to materials” philosophy, which dominated my working philosophy to date.

Question 2. Will new correlations between interior and exterior surfaces create relationships within my three-dimensional compositions that will bring new meaning to my work?

In opening up a form within a sculpture I have been able to release and manipulate new energy by exposing its interior. I believe this is what occurred as I developed this body of work. I am convinced that I have created a separate if not new vision of steel through the dynamic between interior/exterior combined with surface and color.

Collider and *Bobbing for Fire* are the two pieces that satisfied my criteria for the creation of new meaning in my work the most. The large interior view of *Bobbing for Fire* and the intense red color seduce the viewer to come closer with a readiness to touch. This seduction is taken a step further with the interior's surfaces being flocked as well. The color and the surface bring desire to touch into the dialogue with a steel object. A cold oxidized steel sphere, no matter how beautiful, will not create the desire to touch in the same manner.

The combination of the patinated steel and flocked interior is necessary for the flocking and color to have a strong emphasis compositionally. *Collider* is energy untapped. To me it holds answers that I haven't found yet. It retains many of the cold extremities of steel; yet the exterior beckons to be touched as it shimmers in the light. The interior of its outer ring is soft black flocking, the outer Moroccan iron pigment. The iron pigment activates the steel surface. The flocked interiors of the opposing hemispheres are pushed apart to allow the viewer a glimpse of the inner activity. This interior activity visually acts as the catalyst for the surface patination of the steel. *Collider* is a reaction to the correlation between interior and exterior relationships. The addition of surface and interior give *Collider* an existence beyond mere form in space and

moves it towards deeper meaning.

The relationship in *Touch* is similar but much simpler than *Collider*. *Touch* is defining a passage, utilizing the interior and exterior. The smaller hemispheres flow from end to end. However, the relationships clearly are still new.

Without the flocked red interior, I believe the idea of passage or any kind of transference would not be possible. There is little activity except for the idea of temptation in regard to *Converted*. With its downward orientation, the interior is difficult to see. The outer steel exterior is covered in graphite but this doesn't seem to provide the same seduction as iron pigment or flocking. The viewer is only tempted to look into the inner space.

The issue of scale with *Mouthpiece* makes the inference of new meaning from interior/exterior relationships difficult. I feel that if it were a completely closed form, the piece would be boring; yet, the openings in the lower sections do not necessarily add any new meaning as in other pieces.

The Captain of my Pain has a fully exposed interior. The only real tie with the exterior is one of containment. The flocked sphere pinned by hemispheres and covered in glass beads relies completely on the surfaces' ability to draw the viewer into a need to experience the tactility of the object. To me there is no new meaning brought about through this simple action of the exterior containing a seductive surface without some sort of small occlusion to intrigue the viewer or create a passage.

Question 3. Does the use of prefabricated parts have the same impact within an interior/exterior study as it had in my previous work wherein only exteriors were

visible?

All six of the sculptures in this recent body of work relied almost completely on prefabricated elements. I feel that there were few changes between my previous sculptures and recent ones where the availability or need of prefabricated objects made a difference. In earlier work, many times the objects were picked up in an indeterminate way. My recent sculptures, because of their need for some forethought, predetermined that the prefabricated pieces be acquired in advance. Both ways of working, in some way or another had their needs met by the use of prefabricated elements. The idea of showing only exterior or interior /exterior had no bearing on my use of these pre-formed elements. The use of prefabricated elements in my sculpture has become my trademark.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSION

I had once ignored the ideas behind open forms to pursue the mass of the closed exterior. If it were not for years of following a rigorous, externally based, oxidized steel work ethic, I do not believe that what I have undertaken now would have been so fruitful an investigation. With my ability to articulate my sculptural voice in three-dimensional form through my previous body of work, it is now possible to learn and incorporate these new ideas to produce a more powerful image/object.

I realized that there is more power to an object than merely its external formal surface. Mass has force, but when the force is compromised or revealed through exposing the interior the visual impact can grow. What is experienced is not always visual. The addition of surface texture and color begins to distribute emotional weight and balance as well. This is not to say that all of my sculptural forms will benefit or receive these treatments. Now that there is a greater understanding of their effects, it is my belief that the duality of steel and textured/colored surface will speak through my sculpture.

The relationships created between the exterior and interior had an entirely new effect on my perceptions of the work I was doing. The ability to create a dialogue within an object on this level was a new language. Reactions could be calculated to develop narrative between surfaced and patinated pieces. Using this I could vary between the interior and exterior areas to continue the layering for a complexity I could not achieve in

previous work.

While creating this body of work I discovered new ideas within old work as I made the new. Now when I gaze at objects I am able to perceive the inner possibilities as well as their external ones. I am training myself to realize the potential for the interior and using restraint so as not to overexpose the exterior's inside. The mass of the external form is still the key to my work. The use of surface texture and color is my guide to displaying an emotional or narrative tone within an object. Previously I had relied solely on object placement, but by opening the objects, I have created so I have opened the way to a combined form of sculpture containing both interiors and exteriors.